

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ITEM NO. 14

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 5 September 2018

**Ward:** Caversham

**App No.:** 180869/VARIAT

**Address:** Hills Meadow Car Park, George Street, Reading

**Proposal:** Proposed development of un-used land adjacent to Hills Meadow Car Park to provide a hand carwash and valeting operation with associated public toilet facilities, refreshment servery, and waiting area without complying with Condition 2 of planning permission 141841 (temporary three year permission). This application seeks a further five year temporary permission [amended description].

**Applicant:** Hills Meadow Car Wash Limited

**Date received:** 5 June 2018

**Minor Application extension of time agreed date:** 14 September 2018

### RECOMMENDATION:

**Subject to the submission of a satisfactory mitigating landscaping scheme, GRANT a further temporary planning permission.**

#### Conditions to include:

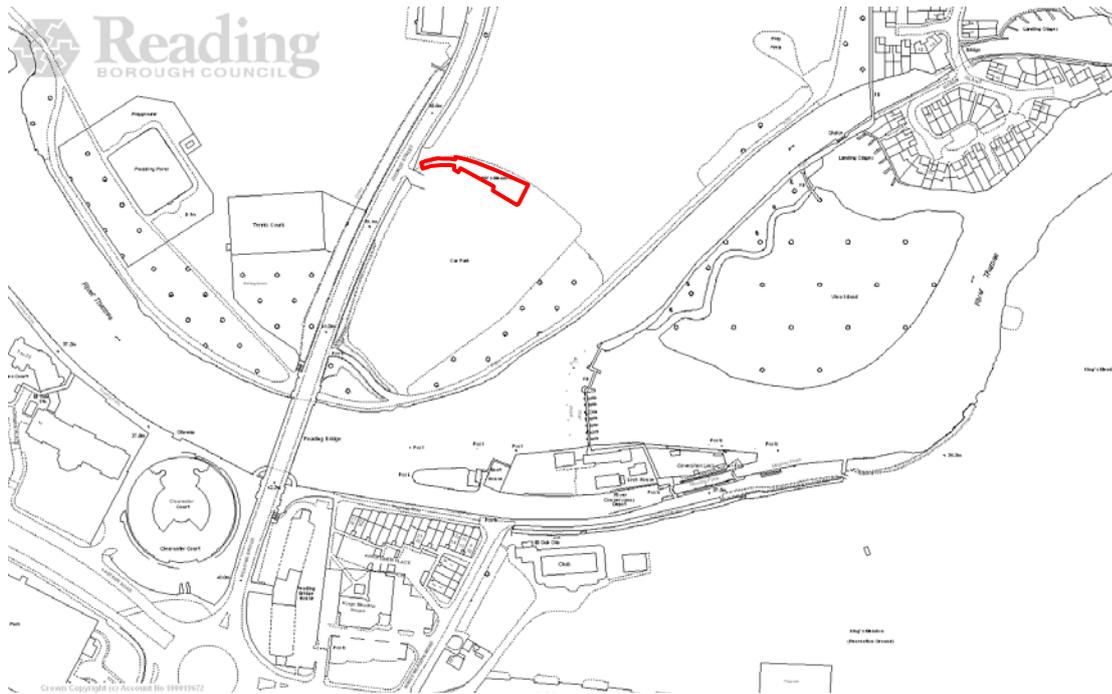
1. Five years from date of permission (reason: not suitable for permanent retention). On cessation, site to be returned to its former condition
2. Undertaking of landscaping scheme [to be submitted]
3. Landscaping maintenance strategy to include further shrub planting, planting in the planting beds and provision of replacement tree within three months of permission/in the next planting season
4. Noise controls as set out in noise report submitted for application/permission 141841
5. No external radios
6. Flooding control and safe egress via FRA
7. Operational management plan: adherence and annual review
8. Maintain parking/circulation spaces marked and clear
9. Hours of use 0600-2100 (mon-Fri); 0700-1900 (Saturdays); 0800-1800 (Sundays and holidays)
10. Toilet and café servery to remain open to the public during hours of use.

#### Informatives:

- Positive and proactive requirement
- Terms and conditions
- Conditions precedent
- S.59 highways Act
- Off-street traffic order in force at Hills Meadow car park
- Reminder re: advertising/signage

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The application site is a small area of land measuring 546 sq.m. at the northern end of the Hills Meadow car park. The site is currently occupied by a hand car wash facility, which is of wooden buildings and panels enclosed by a palisade fence. The area otherwise has an open nature and is part of the designated Major Landscape Feature (the Thames Valley) as set out in the current LDF (local plan) documents. The purpose of the designation is to maintain the general openness of the area.



## 2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 At your meeting on 11 February 2015, Planning Applications Committee resolved to grant temporary three year planning permission for a car wash on this site and this has been operating since January 2016. The relevant reports are attached to this report. This is a hand car wash where vehicles access from George Street and queue within a marked holding area before entering the fenced compound where the vehicles are washed and valeted. The building is essentially a wooden hut and it is has a green corrugated metal roof. The building houses an office, a public WC and a coffee servery.
- 2.2 Information submitted in support of the application includes a planning statement and a CIL form. The building itself is of minimal floorspace and this would not be a CIL-liable development.
- 2.3 The previous planning application was reported to Planning Applications Committee due to the sensitive nature of the site and accordingly, this application to essentially renew the facility is being referred to your meeting.

### 3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 Relevant planning history is as follows:

140815/FUL	Proposed development of un-used land adjacent to Hills Meadow Car Park to provide a hand carwash and valeting operation with associated public toilet facilities, refreshment servery, and waiting area.	REFUSED 2/9/2014 for reasons of impact on the Thames environs and lack of an integrated transport contribution.
141841/FUL	Proposed development of un-used land adjacent to Hills Meadow Car Park to provide a hand carwash and valeting operation with associated public toilet facilities, refreshment servery, and waiting area.	PERMISSION with s106 agreement 30/5/2015
150908/APPCON	Application for approval of details reserved by condition. (141841)	CONDITIONS DISCHARGED 13/7/2015

### 4. CONSULTATIONS

(i) Statutory:

None.

(ii) Non-statutory:

**RBC Transport Strategy:** the transport impact of the hand car wash was fully assessed as part of the 2014 application and a number of conditions were imposed to ensure that there is no impact on the public highway and highway users. There are no transport objection to the renewal of the permission, however, if the car wash is granted permission it should be conditioned to ensure that the future operation complies with the approved Operational Management Plan and the approved parking/access layout.

RBC Leisure and Recreation advises that the facility has been well-run and that the presence of the facility and the CCTV has helped to control antisocial behaviour in the area.

The Environment Agency has referred the LPA to its guidance for consulting the EA and advises that a consultation was not necessary in this case.

RBC Environmental Protection does not object to the application.

The RBC Natural Environment Team advises that there are concerns with the current landscaping situation, see discussion below.

There have been no responses from Caversham GLOBE or CADRA at the time of writing, but any responses will be reported to you in an update.

### Public consultation

A site notice was displayed and letters were sent to addresses who previously commented on application 140841, namely:

3 Tower Close, Emmer Green  
25 Luscombe Close, Caversham  
36 Patrick Close, Caversham; and  
36 Mill Green, Caversham

No letters have been received at the time of writing.

## 5. RELEVANT POLICY AND GUIDANCE

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

5.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (revised 2018)  
Nothing directly relevant.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) guidance  
[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) guidance on planning conditions and temporary planning permissions

5.3 Reading Borough LDF: Core Strategy (2008, as altered 2015)  
CS7 (Design and the Public Realm)  
CS8 (Waterspaces)  
CS20 (Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy LTP)  
CS34 (Pollution and Water Resources)  
CS35 (Flooding)

5.4 Reading Borough LDF: Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009)  
RC5 (Design in the Centre)  
RC14 (Public Realm)

5.5 Reading Borough LDF: Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012, as altered 2015)

DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity)  
DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters)  
SA17 (Major Open Space)

- 5.6 SPD/SPG  
Parking and Design (2011)  
Planning Obligations (2013)

New Local Plan: the Local Planning Authority has produced a Pre-Submission draft local plan. The site is within the EN13 Major Landscape Feature area (the Thames Valley and the EN7C designation covers the area of the BMX track and river edge (but not the car park itself): Hills Meadow is designated as a Local Green Space. Therefore the emerging policy situation - although this has limited weight - is noted as being broadly similar to the adopted policy situation described below.

## 6. APPRAISAL

- 6.1 The main issues are:

- (a) Principle of a continuation of the use/facility and impact on the Thames environs
- (b) Landscaping
- (c) Transport and traffic

(a) Principle of a continuation of the use/facility and impact on the Thames environs

- 6.2 The application site is a small curved area at the northern edge of the car park, abutting the landscaped area which then forms part of the raised ground leading to the BMX track. The car park as a whole, along with the showground area, has an open nature generally surrounded by trees and forms part of the designated Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature. Core Strategy Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires high quality development appropriate to enhance the relevant part of Reading. Policy CS8 (Waterspaces) is relevant. The site is also within the RCAAP area and policies RC5 and RC14 require high quality design and provision of high quality public realm. These policy requirements are generally to be rolled forward in the emerging new Local Plan.

- 6.3 Government advice on temporary permissions is that a further temporary permission should generally not be submitted. The purpose of temporary permissions is either that the development is suitable for a temporary period only, or otherwise to test whether a permanent use might be appropriate. Thus, following a period of temporary use/development, the use should either be discontinued or a permanent permission applied for.  
See: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-of-planning-conditions>

- 6.4 The application includes a planning statement, but this does not clearly give the applicant's justification as to why the use should continue and therefore the

Committee will need to consider the merits of allowing the continued siting of the car wash against the Government's general advice. Officer advice is that although the use is providing a generally satisfactorily-managed facility, due to its appearance and visual impact, it is still not appropriate for permanent retention. Therefore, officers suggest that the way the facility has been developed and operated needs to be thoroughly reviewed in this report, to see whether it is appropriate to grant a further temporary permission as an exceptional circumstance.

6.5 Although sited within a large car park, this is nonetheless a sensitive area in visual terms. The application site is at its nearest point some 100 metres from the Thames riverbank, therefore Policy CS8 applies. Policy CS8 sets out the kinds of development which will be acceptable in the vicinity of the waterways, which will provide:

- Appropriate, attractive uses and buildings that enhance the relationship of buildings, spaces, and routes and creates a high quality public realm;
- Positive contributions to the distinct character, appearance, landscape and amenity of the waterways;
- A strengthened role for waterways as important landscape features, wildlife corridors and recreation opportunities;
- Good, level access to the waterways for all who want to use them; and
- Improved quality of waterway environment through protecting habitats and ensuring that habitat creation is balanced with access and urban issues.

6.6 The purpose of the designation is to maintain the general openness of the area and appropriate development will usually be limited to small-scale and high-quality developments which have a specific recreational-type function. The application is primarily a commercial operation, being a small, efficient car washing and valeting facility, but it includes a WC and tea/coffee servery, which would continue to be available to users of the car park, Christchurch Meadows, users of the skatepark, BMX track, river paths and others and these are facilities which would otherwise not be provided in this locality. Therefore, whilst the primary purpose of the proposal is not in accordance with the policy, these secondary facilities are beneficial and would provide a positive contribution to the amenity of the riverside/waterways. General feedback from RBC Leisure and Recreation is that these facilities are used and are a positive benefit for users of the car park, car wash and the local area. The external café servery hatch has not been included, nor the pedestrian gate entrance opposite, but the facility is provided within the waiting area inside and although not quite as inviting, it is publically accessible.

6.7 In terms of design, the building itself is relatively unassuming, being clad in dark wood. The dark wooden cladding is as approved and is suitable. The woodstain has been applied well and there is no sign that this will not weather suitably for a further five years, although a maintenance regime could be considered. The roof was approved by permission 141841 as an 'Onduline' system roof, a dark green wavy corrugated bituminous roofing system commonly used on agricultural buildings. What has in fact been installed is a green metal sheet system, which is squarer and more industrial in appearance. The roofing system installed is considered to be an inferior material in terms of fitting in with the landscape, but overall, officers do not feel that given the location and colour, there is sufficient detrimental harm to the appearance of the area. The green palisade fencing

erected is 'as approved'. The proposal does not include a spray screen to protect users of the skatepark/ BMX track access, but RBC Leisure and Recreation advises that in fact, the lack of the screen has helped natural surveillance from the facility and has no cause to suggest that the lack of a screen is hindering movement to these facilities.

- 6.8 Overall, in respect of the building itself, the appearance is considered to be suitable for retention for a further temporary period and complies with the above policies.
- 6.9 The inclusion of the WC and café servery for public use in the application is considered to be a particular benefit of the scheme for all users of the car park, BMX track, river, skatepark and Christchurch Meadows, where there are currently no such facilities. The condition to ensure that these facilities are open for the duration of the opening hours of the car wash should again be applied. Additionally, both the Council's Parking Manager and Leisure and Recreation service advise that the inclusion of CCTV has helped provide surveillance and security in an area of the car park which has been subject to anti-social behaviour, for instance, fly-tipping. The appearance building and compound will normally be seen from the Thames in the context of parked vehicles, the skatepark and the recycling bins. The additional presence of cars at the car wash will not be significant, given the present use of the site (a car park). On cessation of the use, the land will be returned to its current state.
- 6.10 On balance on the issue of design and principle, officers consider that the applicant has now provided sufficient justification to demonstrate that the building and its enclosure will have an acceptable impact on the openness of the area. With the conditions recommended including the method of application of the woodstain, officers advise that the application is considered to be suitable overall in terms of the general design policies, and the wider policies which seek appropriate development within the areas close to the Thames (CS8 and SA17).
- 6.11 Whilst the impact of the building itself is considered to be suitable, officers consider that the facility is over-advertised and there is general clutter of signage around the facility and at times on the George Street approaches as well. An informative is recommended advising that any unauthorised signage may be liable for removal via enforcement action.

#### **(b) Landscaping**

- 6.12 Members will note from the attached reports that landscaping was an important mitigating element of the scheme in approving permission 141841 in this sensitive environment. The existing hedging behind the recycling area (within the palisade compound) appears to have been heavily cut back to leave only three shrubs in place. The planter boxes placed on the outside of the palisade fence in the car park are all in situ, but there does not appear to be anything growing in them. It also appears that the Red Willow tree at the western end of the recycling area, has died, possibly due to the recent prolonged period of dry weather, rather than anything to do with the car wash itself. Clearly the above is an unacceptable situation and the Natural Environment Team advises that these matters, which are the subject of conditions of the original planning permission, need to be attended to now in order for the current application to be supportable. Your officers agree and a landscaping scheme and maintenance strategy has been requested and will

be set out in the Update Report with assessment against the relevant policies, including CS38.

### **(c) Transport and traffic**

- 6.13 RBC Transport Strategy advises that the facility has been marked out and provided acceptably and moreover, it has been well-managed by the applicant in the last 2½ years, with no reported instances of obstructions to either the car park access or traffic flow on George Street. This indicates that the signage is suitable and also that the facility is being operated in accordance with the agreed operational management plan. A condition of permission 141841 required that the operational management plan should be reviewed annually and although that has not happened, there have been no observed issues. Transport Strategy continue to advise conditions for adherence to the approved operational management plan and for the plan to be reviewed annually. The highway Authority also advises a condition about parking areas being provided before commencement, but this condition should be adjusted to make sure they are maintained and kept free of obstructions.
- 6.14 The attached report advises that car washes are a traffic generator and that a contribution towards integrated transport was required. That contribution was due in full on implementation (which was January 2016) and has until now not been paid. At the time of writing, the applicant has paid the majority of this contribution and the remainder is expected shortly and will go towards integrated transport schemes aimed at increasing modal share and maintaining traffic flow. The current application is not a CIL-liable development, as it is a temporary building only and of limited floorspace. The facility was conditioned under permission 141841 to have cycle parking for staff, but Transport Strategy no longer advise that this is necessary, particularly as cycles can be parked within the palisade compound and there is a constant presence.
- 6.15 Officers advise that with conditions to continue with the operational management plan, a further temporary permission raises no conflict with the transport policies set out above.

### **Other matters**

#### **Noise impacts**

- 6.16 The facility has resulted in no recorded issues of noise disturbance and this is largely likely due to be the distance to residential properties. Officers advise that the original noise report should again be conditioned to maintain control of this facility and the applicant has been asked to re-supply this, in order to comply with policies CS34 and DM4.

#### **Flood risk**

- 6.17 The EA has referred officers to its guidance for consulting the Environment Agency. Under s73 applications, consultations to the Agency are not necessary when the condition(s) involved are not those suggested by the EA. In this instance, there are no further issues to advice of. The Parking Services Manager advises that there is a localised run-off/drainage issue, but the concern seems to be run-off from the BMX track and not the carwash. Officers advise no concerns in terms of Policy CS35.

## Equalities Act

6.18 In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application. In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

## 7. CONCLUSION

7.1 In conclusion:

- Development in this area is required to be suitable to the main purposes of maintaining the open character of the area and providing facilities suitable for recreation/amenity purposes (WC, café, security). On balance, officers are prepared to recommend that the presence of the building, which is of satisfactory quality for a continued limited period, can be considered positively;
- The facility is generally well-run by the present operator and successful traffic management has ensured that this has been a suitable additional facility to the existing car park;
- The building/use is considered to be suitable for retention for an extended temporary period, providing that a suitable remedial mitigating landscaping scheme is submitted. Conditions need to be adjusted as necessary (see Recommendation).

Case Officer: Richard Eatough

Plans: TBC



2018 Photo of site with car wash facility



Appendices: reports to 11 February 2015 Planning Applications Committee

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 11 February 2015

ITEM NO.

**Ward:** Caversham

**App No.:** 141841

**Address:** Land adjacent to Hills Meadow, George Street, Caversham

**Proposal:** Proposed development of un-used land adjacent to Hills Meadow Car Park to provide a hand carwash and valeting operation with associated public toilet facilities, refreshment servery, and waiting area.

**Applicant:** Mr. Anthony Herbert

**Date received:** 25/11/14

**Minor Application:** 8 week target decision date: 20/1/15 (agreement with applicant to extend until 11/3/15).

### RECOMMENDATION:

Subject to the satisfactory completion of a S.106 legal agreement by 11 March 2015 to RUAP of £4,200 towards the installation of traffic counters to provide better management of the car park and provide live information to the variable message signs regarding the current capacity of the car park, delegate to the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services (HPDRS) to **GRANT planning permission**. If the S.106 legal agreement is not completed by 11 March 2015, then delegate to the HPDRS to refuse planning permission.

#### Conditions to include:

1. Std 3 year permission
2. Plans
3. Three year temporary permission. On cessation, site to be returned to its former condition
4. Materials: submission of woodstain application method
5. Noise control as set out in submitted noise report
6. No external radios
7. Flooding control and safe egress via submitted Flood Risk Standing Advice form
8. Fencing: green palisade fencing (2m from natural ground level) Colour: RAL 6005
9. Submission of details of CCTV system
10. Notwithstanding the submitted plans, swale bed not to be provided
11. Replacement of existing landscaping (tree, hedge) if irreversibly damaged
12. Submission of operational management plan for vehicle circulation
13. Submission of annual review of operational management plan
14. Provision of vehicle parking spaces before operation
15. Submission and approval of secure cycle storage
16. Submission and approval of a Construction Management Statement
17. Hours of use: 0600-2100 (Mon-Fri); 0700-1900 (Saturdays); 0800-1800 (Sundays and holidays).
18. Toilet and café servery operation to be open to the public during hours of use

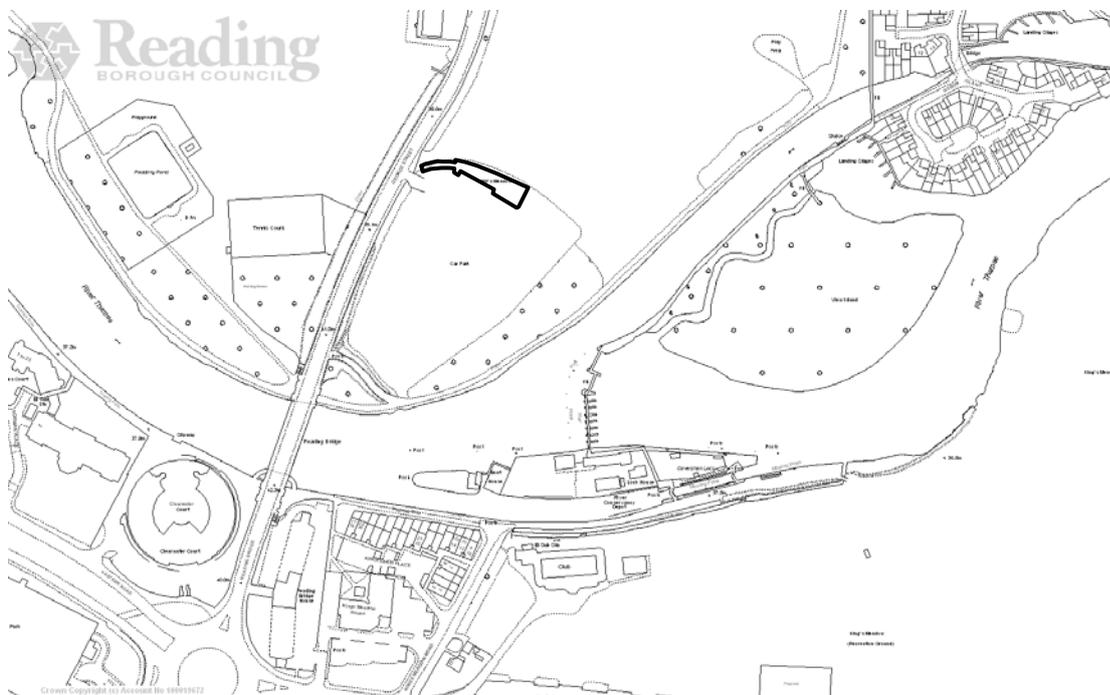
#### Informatives

1. Terms and conditions

2. Pre-commencement conditions
3. S.39 Highways Act
4. Off-street traffic order in force at Hills Meadow Car Park
5. Applicant should ensure access rights over the car park
6. Any signage likely to require separate advertisement consent
7. Environment Agency and Thames Water informatives

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is a small area of land measuring 546 sq.m. at the northern end of the Hills Meadow car park, behind (and to the north of) the recycling bins, immediately west of the skate park and to the south of the BMX track. The application site has an open nature and is part of the designated Major Landscape Feature (ie. the open environs towards the Thames). The purpose of this designation is to maintain the general openness of the area.





## 2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application is for a hand car wash use to be sited within Hills Meadow car park. Vehicles would enter the access from George Street and queue within a marked holding area before entering a compound where the cars are washed and valeted as required. The compound will be fenced and there would be one building, which would house the office, a WC and a small coffee kiosk. The open area towards the eastern part of the site would also have a canopy to prevent spray from wetting the nearby skatepark and the path through to the BMX track.
- 2.2 Drivers would be expected to wait with their vehicles during the wash/valeting cycle and have a coffee and use the WC, although these facilities would also be available to users of the car park itself and the general public. The planned hours of operation are 6am to 9pm Monday to Friday (to coincide with the car park operating hours), 7am to 7pm on Saturday and 8am to 6pm on a Sunday. Three full time and two part time employees shall operate from the site. It is anticipated that up to 40 vehicles shall be cleaned per day.
- 2.3 The application has been submitted with the following supporting information:
- Design and Access Statement (DAS)
  - Noise assessment report
  - Highway report (transport statement)
  - Flood Risk Assessment report (FRA)
  - Material details of the building cladding and fencing
- 2.4 The application is being reported to the Committee at the request of Cllr. Page, due to concerns raised by the Caversham GLOBE Group.

## 3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 140815: Proposed development of un-used land adjacent to Hills Meadow Car Park to provide a hand carwash and valeting operation with associated public toilet facilities, refreshment servery, and waiting area. REFUSED 2/9/2014.

3.2 The two reasons for refusal of planning application 140815 were as follows:

*“Due to the poor quality appearance of the development within this sensitive area in the Thames Valley environs, the proposal would appear as a cramped industrial and urbanising presence in the landscape. The development would therefore be harmful to the special and largely undeveloped character of the area and fail to provide a quality of development suitable to the area or its primary purposes (open space, recreation), in conflict with policies CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) and CS8 (Waterspaces) of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy (2008); policies RC5 (Design in the Centre) and RC14 (Public Realm) of the Reading Borough LDF Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009) and Policy SA17 (Major Landscape Features) of the Reading Borough LDF Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012).”*

*“The application does not supply a financial contribution towards integrated transport measures (the Reading Urban Area Package (RUAP)) via a suitable S.106 agreement. The development therefore fails to mitigate the additional impact of trips associated with the car wash/valeting operation on the Borough’s highway network, contrary to Policy CS20 (Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy) of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy (2008); Policy DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters) of the Reading Borough LDF Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012); and the Council’s adopted SPD, S.106 Planning Obligations (2013).”*

3.3 141527: Proposed hand car wash and valeting operation with associated public toilet facilities, refreshment servery, waiting area and CCTV cameras. OBSERVATIONS SENT 5/11/2014.

## 4. CONSULTATIONS

### 4.1 Consultees

**RBC Transport Strategy:** the principles of this application were previously considered by Transport under application number 140815 which was refused in September 2014 although many of the Transport concerns were resolved aside from the Transport Contribution. Transport Strategy provided further comments under pre-application no. 141527. There are no objections subject to conditions and a contribution towards integrated transport (RUAP), which will go towards the provision of traffic counting and driver messaging signage.

**RBC Environmental Protection:** the main issues are noise and water pollution. Is satisfied with the noise report which has been produced. Pollution issues should be dealt with by the EA/Thames Water.

**RBC Natural Environment Team (Tree Officer):** welcomes the removal of the Willow tree from the compound. The Willow will not be affected by the swale bed, as they are suited to wet environments (such as riverbanks) but the hedge may become waterlogged as a result of the swale becoming overloaded and this could ultimately rot the roots of the hedge. Does not consider that the swale bed is a workable solution in this application and the porous asphalt will soon clog, which could make the run-off situation worse. Suggests that the swale is deleted and the rainwater is diverted straight to the foul sewer. Has provided detailed comments on the shrubs provided next to the fencing.

**Environment Agency:** the site is within Flood Zone 2 and is therefore at risk of flooding. The applicant should complete a Flood Risk Standing Advice (FRSA) form and submit it with the application. Provides advice on foul drainage and pollution prevention.

The **Caversham GLOBE Group** advises that the principle of the car wash is not supported, but provides the following comments/suggestions:

GLOBE members planted the Red Willow tree and hedge which would be affected by the proposal around the year 2000, in order to soften the visual impact of the recycling bins and to help screen the metal fencing behind the recycling bins. Requests that the fencing compound is altered to ensure the tree is outside of the facility, to allow it to be on display and continue its screening function.

The area is proposed for protection under the local plan and the current application is considered to be little different to the application which was refused in 2014. The building would be basically a shipping container with wooden cladding and would be more suited to an industrial estate than a sensitive site within the Thames Parks.

The two metre high metal security fencing with CCTV cameras on high poles might be acceptable on an industrial estate or a petrol station, but is out of keeping in the Thames Parks. The previous application was described by the planning officer as of, 'quasi-industrial appearance' within an area where any development is required to 'maintain the open character of the area'.

Also concerned that the swale bed (reed drainage gully) near to the hedge GLOBE has planted would damage the roots of the hedge.

The planters proposed within the application are too small and this was identified by the planning officer for the refused planning permission in 2014. Suggests planting into the ground instead. There is also a lack of landscaping to soften and screen the development. Suggests hedge within a grass/wildflower strip, 'grasscrete' instead of tarmac and more localised tree planting.

**The Caversham and District Residents' Association (CADRA)** objects to the application.

The site of the proposal is in a poorly maintained, scruffy area of land at the northern end of Hills Meadow car park. Although some changes have been made, still do not feel that the external appearance of the proposed building would be of a standard which would improve the area. As in the previous application, the current DAS statement still proposes a decked area above, surrounded by timber railings, with an artificial grass surface. *[Officer comment: this element of the proposal has been removed in the current planning application]*

The main proposal is for a car wash and there is already a car wash at the garage on an adjacent site. Considers that the inclusion of public toilets and a café is muddled. A car wash is a commercial activity, not related to leisure use or public open space, and as such it does not appear to be in accordance with the Council's own policy on public open spaces.

In addition, the placing of the proposal in alignment with the fenced skate boarding area effectively divides Hills Meadow in two, further isolating the somewhat insecure Northern area even more and adding to the feeling that the area is poorly maintained.

We would therefore urge that the application is refused.

## 4.2 Public consultation

A site notice was displayed on George Street.

One letter of objection has been received, raising the following issues:

- Had previously indicated support for the earlier proposed development. The longer time has gone on I have altered my view.
- Hills Meadow is just about suitable with a kids' cycle leisure park but not a car wash. A car wash is an industrial/commercial activity that should be on an industrial site and not on Hills Meadow.

One letter of support has been received. The supporter considers that this small business is needed for commuter motorists. Also there are currently no toilet facilities at Hills Meadow, which is something that is required after a long commuter journey particularly with all the traffic delays in getting to the car park. Thinks it would be churlish not to favourably consider this application as the current area is vacant and of little use to the public.

## **5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

5.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)  
Nothing directly relevant.

5.3 Reading Borough LDF: Core Strategy (2008)  
CS7 (Design and the Public Realm)  
CS8 (Waterspaces)  
CS20 (Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy LTP)  
CS34 (Pollution and Water Resources)  
CS35 (Flooding)

5.4 Reading Borough LDF: Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009)  
RC5 (Design in the Centre)  
RC14 (Public Realm)

5.5 Reading Borough LDF: Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012)  
DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity)  
DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters)  
SA17 (Major Open Space)

5.6 SPD/SPG  
Parking and Design (2011)  
Planning Obligations (2013)

## 6. APPRAISAL

### 6.1 The main issues are:

- (a) *Impact on the Thames environs*
- (b) *Transport and traffic*
- (c) *Noise impact*
- (d) *Flood risk*

#### (a) *Impact on the Thames environs*

- 6.2 The application site is a small curved area at the northern edge of the car park, abutting the landscaped area which then forms part of the raised ground leading to the BMX track. The car park as a whole, along with the showground area, has an open nature generally surrounded by trees and forms part of the designated Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature.
- 6.3 Core Strategy Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires high quality development appropriate to enhance the relevant part of Reading. The site is also within the RCAAP area and policies RC5 and RC14 require high quality design and provision of high quality public realm.
- 6.4 The application site is at its nearest point some 100 metres from the riverbank, therefore Policy CS8 (Waterspaces) is relevant. Policy CS8 sets out the kinds of development which will be acceptable in the vicinity of the waterways, which will provide:
- Appropriate, attractive uses and buildings that enhance the relationship of buildings, spaces, and routes and creates a high quality public realm;
  - Positive contributions to the distinct character, appearance, landscape and amenity of the waterways;
  - A strengthened role for waterways as important landscape features, wildlife corridors and recreation opportunities;
  - Good, level access to the waterways for all who want to use them; and
  - Improved quality of waterway environment through protecting habitats and ensuring that habitat creation is balanced with access and urban issues.
- 6.5 The purpose of this designation is to maintain the general openness of the area and appropriate development will usually be limited to small-scale and high-quality developments which have a specific recreational-type function. The application is primarily a commercial operation, being a small, efficient car washing and valeting facility, but it would include a WC and a café servery, which would be available to users of the car park, Christchurch Meadows, users of the skatepark, BMX track, river paths and others. Therefore, whilst the primary purpose of the proposal is not in accordance with the policy, these secondary facilities would be beneficial and would provide a positive contribution to the amenity of the riverside/waterways.
- 6.6 In terms of detailed design, there have been a number of improvements since the previous planning application (140815), which was refused and the applicant has worked through these issues with officers in pre-application discussions. The refused application featured shipping containers with no details of how the wooden cladding was to be attached or information on its quality. It included an external staircase and a seating area attached to the top of it. Not only did this accentuate

the questionable design, it also unnecessarily raised the height of the building and drew attention to the facility within the open environment which contributes to the special character of the Thames and its environs. Officers were also concerned with the general equipment required for the car wash (splash screens, etc.) and the high, industrial palisade security fencing proposed.

- 6.7 The policies above require appropriate and attractive uses and buildings that enhance the character of the area in which they are situated and produce a high quality public realm in this sensitive landscape. The DAS suggests that the building will in fact appear rustic in appearance and will therefore appear as a suitable structure in the landscape. The applicant has provided additional information to explain how the cladding system would work. Wooden cladding of former shipping containers is becoming a popular way of creating floorspace and modern temporary (sometimes permanent) buildings and example images are provided at the end of this report. Thick pine planks would be fastened to battens and these would not be linked together or have 'lapped' boards, but would be butted up to each other with a slight gap, to allow the boards to expand or contract, dependent on the moisture in the air. This is a potential issue with the car wash spray. The photo at the end of this report shows a material sample and whilst officers are content with the quality of the wood, the woodstain applied to the sample is uneven and the applicant is supportive of officers' suggestion of a roller or spray application, to ensure a suitable even coverage. A condition could be applied. The design has now omitted the roof terrace and proposes a shallow-pitched roof with a dark green 'Onduline' roof system, which is often used for farm buildings.
- 6.8 The car wash equipment is unchanged from the previous proposal, although these are considered to be comparatively minor structures. However, the applicant is continuing to propose green palisade fencing. Although this is often used in industrial situations, it is also the same type of fencing which has been approved in a number of schools in the Borough and has therefore been considered suitable in residential situations. It is also the same type of fencing as is already on the site to the rear of the recycling bins. The applicant wishes to 'continue' to use the same fence around the compound, to match the present fence. Whilst officers continue to maintain concern for the fence - and consider that other types of fence may be more suitable - on balance, it is recommended to you that a continuation of the green palisade fence in a comparatively limited area of this open space, is not objectionable. The location of the fencing on the eastern edge abuts the footpath which leads to the BMX track and the facility will provide additional surveillance over the path. CADRA considers that the facility will effectively divide the area, although to a certain extent, the skatepark already does this; it is accepted that in visual terms, the facility may disrupt localised views through to the trees and open area of the BMX track beyond. However, from longer-range views, given the parked cars in the car park, this impact may not be so evident.
- 6.9 The landscaping proposed consists of retaining the existing hedge behind the recycling containers and the design of the compound has been amended and now omits the Willow Tree, in order to respond to the concerns from the GLOBE Group. The proposal is, however, hard up against these features, which make a contribution to the character of the area and although there is no evidence to indicate that these features would be compromised, being in the vicinity of this activity could involve litter, oversaturation or damage by car doors/over-running etc. The Tree Officer considers that the provision of a swale bed to deal with rainwater from the building is well-meaning but potentially problematic in this area, where rainwater and clogging of the porous asphalt proposed could easily

lead to an oversaturation of the swale and damage to the hedge. A condition is proposed to omit the swale. In the circumstances, it is considered to be appropriate that if during the operation, any of the landscaping is damaged, it shall be replaced at the cessation of the use.

- 6.10 The series of small planters proposed within the site was not considered to be a meaningful landscaping scheme but they would have been regarded more as 'window boxes'. In response to objections from the Globe Group, the applicant has removed them and amended plans show shrubs being planted in front of the palisade fence. The Tree Officer has been asked to provide her comments on this amendment to the plans and this will be reported to your meeting.
- 6.11 The inclusion of the WC and café servery for public use in the application is considered to be a particular benefit of the scheme for all users of the car park, BMX track, river, skatepark and Christchurch Meadows, where there are currently no such facilities. A condition is necessary to ensure that these facilities are open for the duration of the opening hours of the car wash. These facilities have also been adjusted so that they appear more approachable to the public by making sure that the gates in the fencing are opposite these entrances. Additionally, the application includes CCTV and although this is primarily to serve the car wash, it will help to provide surveillance and security in an area of the car park where the RBC Parks and Leisure Service advises that there have been incidences of vandalism and fly-tipping. A condition should confirm the details of this and the scope of camera coverage.
- 6.12 Officers consider that the design has improved sufficiently since the refused application and is now at a stage where it is supportable. It should also be borne in mind that the building and compound will normally be seen from the Thames in the context of parked vehicles, the skatepark and the recycling bins. The additional presence of cars at the car wash will not be significant, given the present use of the site (a car park). On cessation of the use, the land will be returned to its current state.
- 6.13 On balance on the issue of design and principle, officers consider that the applicant has now provided sufficient justification to demonstrate that the building and its enclosure will have an acceptable impact on the openness of the area. With the conditions recommended including the method of application of the woodstain, officers advise that the application is considered to be suitable overall in terms of the general design policies, and the wider policies which seek appropriate development within the areas close to the Thames (CS8 and SA17).

### ***(b) Transport and traffic***

#### Circulation and layout

- 6.14 RBC Transport Strategy has responded to various pieces of information from the applicant, in order to deal with their concerns for the management of the facility. Their main concern is for blocking of parking and circulation areas within the main car park and traffic generation more widely from the proposal.
- 6.15 The proposed layout allows for up to 10 vehicles to queue for the car wash, with seven parking bays within the compound itself and three on the access road. A further four bays are provided within the facility for cleaning and valeting operations. The first 10 metres of the access will be marked with yellow box

hatched markings with supporting signage to ensure that the access point is not blocked by vehicles waiting to enter the car wash. Signage indicating queueing times is also to be provided at the access point to discourage customers from joining the queue when there are excessive queue lengths and waiting times. Customers can either wait in their vehicles and move forward to the next available waiting bay or leave their keys in the vehicle and wait in the waiting room. Operatives will move the cars forward when required and monitor the queue length from the CCTV cameras to ensure the queue length does not queue back towards the yellow box hatching or obstruct emergency access into the car park. RBC Transport Strategy has estimated trip rates attributable to the proposal and is satisfied with the proposed layout with respect to vehicles awaiting entry to the facility.

- 6.16 Valeting is to be carried out below an open sided canopy attached to the proposed building. Once the vehicles have been washed they can either move forward to a vacant valeting bay or exit the facility. All vehicles will be dried before leaving the facility. One valeting bay will be for cars having their final wipe down before exiting through the car park and the other will be for a more thorough internal clean. The Highway Report confirms that all staff and operatives for the car wash will park their vehicles in the adjacent NCP car park and no staff vehicles will be parked on-site.
- 6.17 It is agreed that the queueing area is suitable, the waiting areas can be marked out and a queue management plan can put in place. However, if this management plan is not correctly adhered to or successful, traffic conflict and congestion could occur and this could include queueing out onto George Street, one of the Borough's principal arterial routes. Officers therefore consider a temporary permission is appropriate, as it will ultimately be down to the careful and efficient operation by the car wash management to ensure that conflict and congestion does not occur. Conditions are recommended for submission of a suitable operational management plan and further, that annual reviews of the plan are also submitted. A condition for secure staff cycle parking is required.
- 6.18 With the conditions indicated, officers are satisfied that there is no conflict with policies CS20, CS24 and DM12.

#### Traffic generation from the proposal

- 6.19 This type of facility is a specific traffic generator and these trips are generally not related to other trips and therefore involving additional traffic on the Borough's highway network, or else significant diversions. These new trips on the road network need to be mitigated by the development, in accordance with the Council's development plan policies. The applicant's transport consultant and RBC Transport Strategy have investigated the issue thoroughly in pre-application negotiations in late 2014 before submitting the current planning application and are in agreement on the overall contribution level, which is related to the number of trips produced by the use. However, given the temporary nature of the proposal, it is reasonable to reduce the S.106 Transport contribution to reflect the three year planning permission sought. Therefore, if temporary planning permission is granted for a period of 3 years, a reduced contribution of £4,200 will be acceptable to reflect the temporary nature of the development. The remaining balance of £9,994 would be requested if permanent permission was sought or if a further temporary was sought after this period.

- 6.20 Integrated transport (RUAP) contributions are often used to improve modal share along a transport network, for instance, by supporting bus services and diverting trips from the private car. In this instance, the applicant's proposals will directly increase the number of car trips on the network.
- 6.21 The contribution would be used towards the installation of traffic counters to provide better management of the car park and provide live information to the Variable Message Signs regarding the current capacity of the car park. This will help to reduce congestion within the town by reducing unnecessary trips by the private car to car parks that have reached capacity.
- 6.22 The fact that the contribution will be used within the geographical area of Central Reading and is directly related to the mitigation of harm caused by the development means that the contribution is justified in terms of the tests in the NPPF in that it is:
- *Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms*
  - *Directly related to the development*
  - *Fair and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development"*
- 6.23 For the above reasons and with the contribution as described above, the development is considered to be suitable in terms of policies CS9, CS20, DM3 and DM12.

***(c) Noise impacts***

- 6.24 Although the site is relatively distant from residential properties, there are instances - for instance, on a Sunday morning - when traffic and other background noise is light and the sound of the operation could 'carry'. Associated noises are radios, vacuums, compressors, etc. These could cause residential disturbance, or disturbance to the tranquillity of Hills Meadow/Christchurch Meadows. The noise assessment submitted concludes that there is a 'positive indication that complaints are unlikely'.
- 6.25 A range of conditions were agreed within the refused planning application (timings, overall sound levels, etc.) and officers agree that noise should be controlled via conditions to suitably maintain amenity levels, in accordance with policies DM4, CS8, CS34 and SA17.

***(d) Flood risk***

- 6.26 The site is within Flood Zone 2 (ie. at a 'medium risk' of flooding). There is no objection from the Environment Agency, subject to completion of the Standing Advice form. The applicant completed with the previous planning application, without instruction from the case officer and it appears to be satisfactory. It is considered that this is a low-risk use and although there may be sequentially more preferable sites for the use, the risk to the public is extremely low and issues of flood storage would be relatively straightforward to control via conditions. Water from the operation will discharge to the foul sewer and informatives should be attached to any permission. On this basis, the application is suitable in terms of flooding and complies with Policy CS35.

**Other matters**

### Equalities Act

6.27 In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application. In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

## 7. CONCLUSION

7.1 In conclusion:

- Development in this area is required to be suitable to the main purposes of maintaining the open character of the area and providing facilities suitable for recreation purposes.
- The improvements which have been made to external design now indicate to officers that visual harm to the principal vistas in the Thames environs is unlikely and there are public and recreational benefits to the proposal; and
- The contribution which has been agreed is suitable to the applicant and officers.
- Given the care which needs to be taken to manage the facility so as not to cause traffic conflict and congestion, a temporary permission is recommended.

Case Officer: Richard Eatough

Plans:

1:1250 Location plan

13/039/02 Rev. A Block Plan (site layout plan) (received 23/1/15)

14/039/03 Rev. D Plans & Elevations (received 23/1/15)

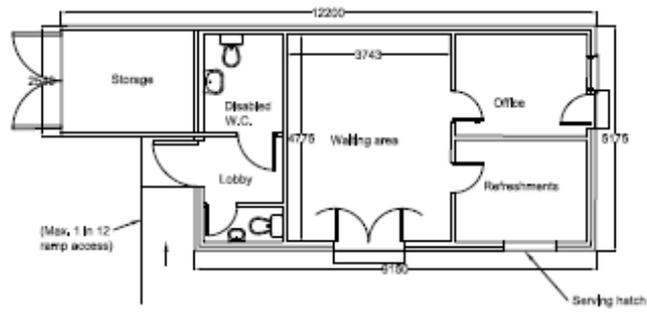


Sample of wooden cladding material

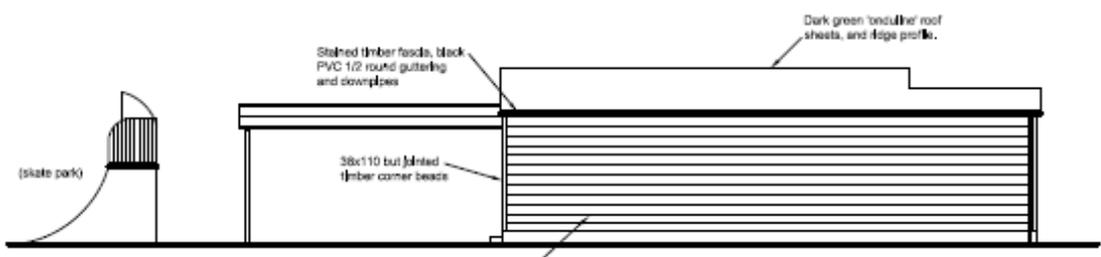


Application site as viewed from the south

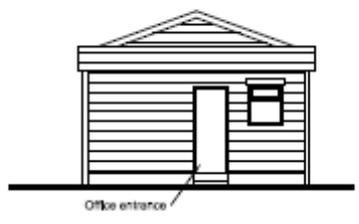




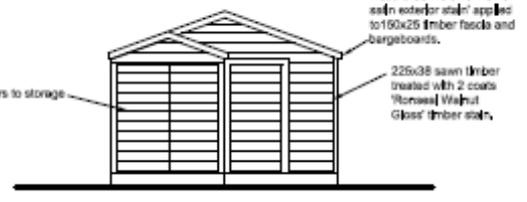
**GROUND FLOOR PLAN**



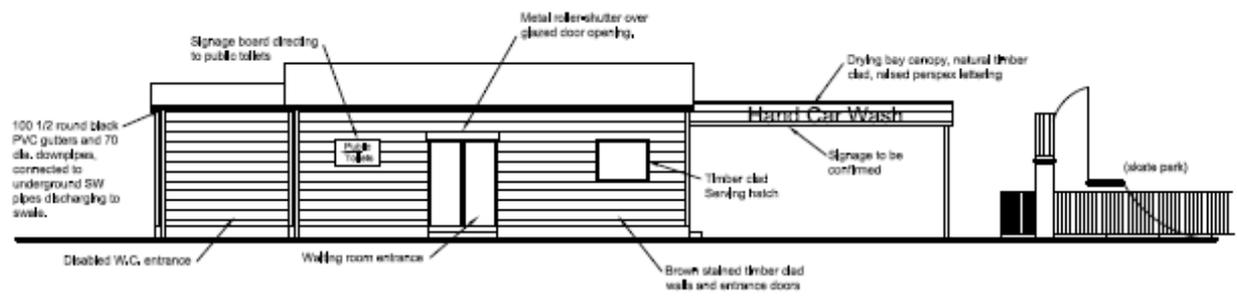
**NORTH-EAST ELEVATION**



**SOUTH-EAST ELEVATION**



**NORTH-WEST ELEVATION**



**SOUTH-WEST ELEVATION**



**WDC**  
 Wadhampson Design Centre  
 Construction Design Services

The Wadhampson Design Centre  
 Station Road, Wadhampson,  
 Reading, Berkshire RG4 1SE  
 Tel: 0118 9710 300

**PROPOSED HAND CAR WASH OPERATION**  
 HILLS MEADOW, GEORGE ST., READING, RG4 8DH,  
 PLANS & ELEVATIONS

DATE: 11/01/2013  
 DRAWN: J. GIBSON  
 CHECKED: J. GIBSON  
 DATE: 14/02/2013  
 SCALE: 1:100

## UPDATE REPORT:

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 11 FEBRUARY 2015

ITEM NO. 12

**Ward:** Caversham  
**App No.:** 141841  
**Address:** Land adjacent to Hills Meadow, George Street, Caversham  
**Proposal:** Proposed development of un-used land adjacent to Hills Meadow Car Park to provide a hand carwash and valeting operation with associated public toilet facilities, refreshment servery, and waiting area.

### RECOMMENDATION: (AS PER MAIN AGENDA REPORT).

#### Additional condition:

Landscaping to south of palisade fencing to be implemented in accordance with submitted Landscape Implementation Statement.

#### 1. ADDITIONAL OBJECTION

1.1 Since the publication of the main Agenda report, an additional objection has been received from a local resident, raising the following issues (which were not covered in the main report):

1. Commuters who may use the car park who have their own arrangements for cleaning their cars and there are plenty of other car washes nearby. Therefore, we do not need these not very nice new buildings
2. The Pavilion building at Christchurch Meadows is planned to be refurbished for changing rooms, a café and toilets, why do we need another toilet across the road?
3. The information panels to be erected can be done so by NCP
4. We should preserve the wild spaces left in Hills Meadow, which was left by Mr. Hill for the people of Reading
5. It is in the flood plain and there should not be any further development by someone who is unaware of the risks and is only concerned with the success of a commercial operation.

1.2 Officers provide a brief response to these additional points below.

1.3 In response to points 1 and 5, the availability of other car washes is not a material planning consideration. The buildings are considered to be appropriate and the application is also suitable in terms of flood risk.

1.4 In response to point 2, the Council's Parks and Leisure Service advises that no refurbishment is planned for the sports pavilion building in Christchurch Meadows. A proposal for refurbishment did form part of the multi-use leisure development proposals for Christchurch Meadows and this was promoted and consulted on for adventure golf, a 'high ropes' facility and café but was not pursued following the flooding of the site and resultant loss of investors. The keeper's hut at Christchurch Meadows was refurbished last year and a public toilet added. This toilet is to serve the paddling pool/play area and is only available May-September

(the Summer Season) ie. while an attendant is on site. There is a 24-hour pay WC near the paddling pool as well, however, the Parks Service experience is that these facilities are too distant from Hills Meadow to be easily used by the public.

- 1.5 In response to Point 3, it is the Highway Authority (not the car park operator) who is required to manage the capacity of the car parks and driver information, as part of the overall management of the Borough's roads and the RUAP contribution is therefore required.
- 1.6 In response to point 4, the main report discusses in detail the effect of the proposal on the openness of Hills Meadow and concludes that this is suitable.

## 2. LANDSCAPING

- 2.1 At paragraph 6.10 of the main report, the Tree Officer's comments are awaited on the amended plans and a minor landscaping scheme which now also includes a landscaping implementation scheme. Whilst officers did not require this landscaping scheme, it has been offered by the applicant in response to the concerns from Caversham GLOBE and the following explanation is provided for the scheme.
- 2.2 Given the three year limitation upon the duration of the proposed development, the applicant has opted to provide for fast growing climbing plants against the fencing, coupled with a selection of plants providing for hedging, which are tolerant of wet ground conditions, planted to the front of the fence. Common Alder is considered to be particularly appropriate in this situation given their tolerance of wet ground conditions and fast growing nature. Once the hedge has established, the climbing plants would be removed (however, this is unlikely to be within the three year period of the current application under consideration).
- 2.3 The Tree Officer has now reviewed the additional landscaping information which has been provided, and agrees that the species, layout and implementation scheme is suitable for this temporary proposal. Officers advise that there is an additional visual benefit to the scheme as this will serve to soften the visual impact of the palisade fencing when seen from the car park. The implementation scheme shall be the subject of a condition.

Case officer: Richard Eatough